

Washington, D.C. – To provide our service members and their families the benefits they deserve, and to ensure our military is equipped and in a proper state of readiness to deal with 21st century challenges, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA – 07) supported the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, which was approved by the House Armed Services Committee. In total, HR 2647 authorizes \$550.4 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense (DOD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy. In the bill approved by the committee, the Congressman authored nine amendments to deal with specific areas in which the military must improve to keep our nation safe and offer the men and women who wear the cloth of this nation – and their families – the care they deserve.

The legislation Congressman Sestak included in the bill addresses: providing better mental and physical care for our troops, with one related amendment focusing on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; transforming the military to one that is more “knowledge-intensive” in an era when dominance of cyberspace is critical; enhancing the efficiency of military equipment; and ensuring fair restitution for American prisoners of war and their families. In addition, building on an amendment passed in last year’s bill, the Congressman introduced legislation that would offer necessary benefits to the increasing number of military families with autistic children. While not in the bill passed by the committee, the Congressman will continue to work toward passage of this amendment as the bill moves to the House floor.

“The annual consideration of this act provides an important opportunity, as a member of this committee, to make sure our military will have the resources it needs to keep our country safe and that our troops and their families are taken care of,” said Congressman Sestak. “Inaction is not an option when it comes to ensuring our service members with PTSD get the best possible treatment, nor when considering ways in which our military can become more efficient and transform to best meet future threats to our security. Each of these amendments won support of the committee because they address specific areas in which we know we can do better and in which our troops deserve better.”

PTSD

Recognizing that it is vital to address the psychological effects of today’s wars on our troops, the Congressman inserted a provision directing the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to submit to Congress a report evaluating and comparing the effectiveness of programs designed to diagnose, treat, and prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

According to a 2008 RAND study, nearly 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans screen positive for PTSD or depression. This problem has been compounded by the fact that mental health support for troops in the field is inadequate. According to Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the proportion of behavior health workers deployed to Iraq dropped from 1 per 387 service members in 2004 to 1 per 734 service members in 2007. At the same time, Army suicide rates have continued to rise each year since the beginning of the Iraq war while many of our brave men and women do not seek treatment because of the perceived stigma of receiving mental health assistance. It is incumbent upon Congress to take whatever actions possible to resolve this continuing crisis. Our heroes deserve the very best treatment possible, and this provision mandating assessment of existing programs is a critical step

Combat Casualty Research

To address another area in which care of our service members requires improvement, this provision stipulates that the Secretary of Defense will establish the National Casualty Care Research Center at the US Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (MRMC). The Center will build upon the MRMC's Combat Casualty Care Research Program which does not sufficiently integrate civilian research and is not a national body that centralizes combat casualty and trauma care research programs nationwide. The National Casualty Care Research Center will act as both a national center for all combat casualty care research and a center for civilian/military collaboration into combat casualty care.

Visiting NIH Senior Neuroscience Fellowship

The Secretary of Defense will establish the Visiting NIH Senior Neuroscience Fellowship Program at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. The Program is intended to provide critical neuroscience expertise and support to both of these organizations through implementation of visiting fellowships for NIH scientists with appropriate research expertise as well as extramural scientific review experience. It will serve as an important part of an effort to promote sponsorship of state-of-the-art neuroscience research. DARPA's current neuroscience program is innovative, but small, and does not integrate the full range of civilian neuroscience research that is relevant to DARPA's mission. The Center is a newly formed organization with a collaborative mission which is well suited to the Program.

Joint Force Funding for Cyberspace

To understand the scope and challenges inherent in acquiring transformational military capabilities in cyberspace, this amendment would commission two Department of Defense studies to analyze alternative models and recommend changes from the present Service-based approach for acquisition and funding of inter-connected cyberspace systems. The Congressman has maintained that the greatest improvement in warfare capability would be to effect a transformational change that ensures our military always has the “knowledge” to act before his adversary as a result of cyberspace dominance.

In FY2008, Congress commissioned a study to further define and enhance the roles and missions of each branch of the military. However, in the area of network-centric warfare (cyberspace), it is the Joint forces which collectively possess the potential to significantly transform and improve the nation's future war-fighting capability. When possible, procurement by the Joint forces should be favored because it is in the best position to address cybersecurity needs with a smoother acquisitions process. The ultimate end state of such a transformation in cyberspace would be something not yet in place: assured common knowledge across the services, enabling U.S. deployed forces to act more swiftly and decisively than any adversary.

Thorium Study for Energy Efficiency

This provision directs the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to jointly carry out a study on the use of thorium-liquid fueled nuclear reactors for naval power, an important assessment of an energy source that has shown great potential to be more efficient for our military. While our nuclear Navy has thrived with a continuing record of zero reactor accidents, thorium may be more efficient than uranium as a fuel source. Massive fuel rods would not have to be utilized, and it produces only 1/2000th the waste of uranium. In domestic applications, waste can even be stored on-site, eliminating the necessity of facilities such as Yucca Mountain. Large deposits of thorium can be mined domestically in States such as Idaho, and we already have 160,000 tons in reserve.

Under a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, any new major combatant vessels for the U.S. strike force is required to be constructed with an integrated nuclear power system unless the Secretary of Defense submits a notification to Congress that the inclusion of an integrated nuclear power system in a given class of ship is not in the national interest. While the Congressman is not yet convinced that nuclear power for

Naval ships is always cost-beneficial in the long term, if there are nuclear-powered vessels that continue to be built under Congressional mandate, then all options for the fuel source are worthy of consideration.

Claims of American Prisoners of War (POWs)

Congressman Sestak continued his ongoing fight to ensure that American soldiers and citizens held and tortured in Iraq during the first Gulf War are adequately compensated. He successfully submitted an amendment that expresses the sense of Congress that their claims should be resolved.

In a 2003 suit brought by 17 American POWs and 37 of their family members, Iraq, Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Intelligence Service were found liable for \$653 million in compensatory damages and \$306 million in punitive damages. President Bush, however, vetoed the National Defense Authorization Act in 2007 to prevent the court-approved payment of compensation from Iraq for the American POWs and a group of American citizens who were held as human shields during that conflict. In 2008, the House passed The Justice for Victims of Torture and Terrorism Act, introduced by Congressman Sestak and Congressman Bruce Braley of Iowa, which would have given the Iraqi government 90 days to provide fair restitution to the victims or the waiver of immunity for the Iraqi government would be repealed. The bill served the interests of the reconstruction of Iraq by forgiving as much as two-thirds of the cost of compensatory judgments against Iraq as well as punitive damages. However, the Senate did not consider the bill. This amendment cites the damages called for in the bill as appropriate and urges resolution of these claims in the ongoing negotiations between the State Department and Government of Iraq.

Rank of the Chief of the Dental Corps, United States Navy

The Congressman continues to view dental treatment as another essential element of care. Our brave service members will only receive the very best healthcare possible if the appropriate senior officials are responsible for critical policy decisions. This provision mandates that the Chief of the Dental Corps, U.S. Navy, hold a rank not less than that of Rear Admiral (Upper Half). The measure provides parity with the Army and Air Force requirements for the heads of their dental corps.

Experimental Aircraft Testing

Congressman Sestak successfully submitted an amendment granting the Secretary of the Navy statutory authority to transfer title and associated liability for the X-49A experimental high speed compound helicopter to Piasecki Aircraft Corporation. This would allow full flight demonstration of advanced rotorcraft technology beyond legal speed limits. The helicopter has thus far demonstrated a remarkable capability and may someday serve our men and women in uniform in the field. This possibility is further enhanced by language in the amendment which provides for government authority to buy back technology which is developed from test flights.

The X-49A is a technology flight demonstrator based on a Navy furnished YSH-60F modified with a Vectored Thrust Ducted Propeller (VTDP) Compound Helicopter. Custody of the X-49A was transferred to Piasecki in 2003 to allow flight demonstration under FAA Experimental Airworthiness Type Certificate. Because the Navy retained title and liability for the aircraft, the contract transferring custody includes a provision limiting the Phase 1 flight testing within the baseline SH-60F's Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization (NATOPS) flight envelope limits. Congressman Sestak's amendment would relieve the government of liability, transferring it to Piasecki and thus permitting continued flight tests of this vital rotorcraft technology.

Autism

Congressman Sestak introduced an amendment which would mandate treatment of autism under TRICARE, the military's primary healthcare provider. This legislation would build on an amendment he had introduced which was signed into law last year that increased Autism coverage 20 percent under TRICARE's Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) from \$2,500 per month to \$36,000 per year (\$3,000 per month).

However, the final version of last year's amendment did not address the fact that only 5 percent of eligible children are receiving coverage under ECHO because of excessive delays and arbitrary coverage denials which are permitted under ECHO, but not under TRICARE.

Approximately 8,500 children from military families have autism, which is the fastest growing serious developmental disability in the U.S; however, a recent estimate by the Congressional

Budget Office shows only 700 autistic children are enrolled in ECHO because of long waits and limited coverage. ECHO's limit on autistic care allows only five hours of therapy per week, while studies by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Research Council show that these youth need from 25-40 hours per week.

The Congressman withdrew this amendment only after he pledged to pursue the amendment when the bill is considered on the House floor. He will work with Susan Davis, Chairman of the Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, on this vital piece of legislation and is also appreciative of the actions by Congressman Walter Jones, a senior Republican on the Committee, who spoke in support of the amendment.

Other Details of HR 2647

Among its key provisions, the bill provides a 3.4 percent pay raise for all service members and assists military families through programs such as a new internship pilot for military spouses to obtain employment with federal agencies, providing them opportunities in careers that are transferable as they move from station to station. The legislation increases funding for family support overall by \$263 million over the FY 2009 budget request, for a total of \$2.1 billion in this year's bill. Other measures specifically addressing service members' healthcare and families include:

- Requiring a medical examination before a service member who has been deployed overseas in support of a contingency operation and diagnosed with either PTSD or TBI, can be involuntarily separated under other than honorable conditions;
- Establishing a monthly compensation allowance for members with combat-related catastrophic injuries or illnesses so they can receive assistance with the daily activities of life from a non-medical attendant;
- Providing \$50 million to assist local education agencies providing support to military children;
- Providing \$1.95 billion for family housing programs to support and expand quality housing for all service members and their families; and
- Requiring DOD to review the standards used to calculate the monthly rates for basic allowance for housing to determine if the current standards are meeting the needs of today's military families.

Military Readiness

The Congressman also supported the legislation's provisions to restore the military's readiness. More than seven years of continuous combat operations have strained our services. As examples, our Army has done almost no training in any aspect of warfare except counterinsurgency for the past five years, and no Army unit can deploy on the required timeline to meet almost any other contingency in the world, including in South Korea. This legislation directs the Government Accounting Office to review the Department of Defense's approach to balancing the dueling requirements of troop deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan with our troops' training needs. Provisions include:

- Providing \$4.7 billion for training opportunities for the Army;
- Authorizing \$11 billion for Army reset and \$2 billion for Marine Corps reset;
- Providing \$6.9 billion to address equipment shortfalls in the National Guard and Reserves.
- Adding \$450 million for Army barracks improvements and \$440 million to support National Guard and Reserve military construction projects;
- Adding \$762 million to achieve 100 percent of the requirement for sustainment of military base facilities and infrastructure, including Department of Defense schools;
- Adding \$395 million to fill the Navy's top unfunded requirement: \$200 million for deferred maintenance for Navy ships and \$195 million for Navy aviation depot maintenance;
- Including \$176 million to refill and maintain our nation's prepositioned stocks in order to help us prepare for any future contingencies; and
- Increasing the size of the military by 15,000 Army troops, 8,000 Marines, 14,650 Air Force personnel and 2,477 Navy sailors.

Furthermore, Congressman Sestak commended the bill's funding of appropriate missile defense systems, including increases for Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense and Theater High Altitude Area Defense by a total of \$900 million. As he has advocated for in all areas of defense spending, the Congressman supported the committee's decision to make these proven systems a priority. He also voted, along with Strategic Forces Subcommittee Chairman Ellen Tauscher, to cut troubled programs with unproven capabilities, such as the Kinetic Energy Interceptor program that was supposed to shoot down enemy ballistic missiles but has had many problems in its design, staying on budget and meeting its schedule.

"The Aegis system has proven that it can defeat incoming missiles, and that it could protect Europe if the ground-based sites planned in Poland and the Czech Republic go nowhere," the Congressman said. "This is a massive change for our nation's missile defense system...instead of building that expensive system in Poland, three Aegis ships with minor software upgrades Secretary Gates has pledged his support for, would have the same capability."

Moreover, the bill further addresses cybersecurity, an important part of dealing with today's defense challenges. The Act requires DOD to establish a joint program office for cyber operations capabilities to assist in the development of future capabilities including manpower development, tactics and technologies for the services, defense agencies and combatant commands. In addition, it requires DOD to report on the recruitment, retention and career progression of military and civilian cyber operations personnel and authorizes \$5 million above the budget request to support K-12 and undergraduate Reserve Officer Training Corps educational outreach programs in math and computer science.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

To address security in Afghanistan and Pakistan, this legislation authorizes \$7.4 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces and establishes oversight of our progress in stabilizing both nations. For Afghanistan, assessments must be made on U.S. progress in assisting Afghan people with building a functional government, spreading the rule of law, reducing corruption, decreasing the ability of anti-government elements to carry out attacks, and improving the economy. For Pakistan, a report is required on progress toward: Pakistan no longer being a safe haven for terrorist or insurgent networks; increasing effective civilian governance; and creating conditions for long-term economic and social growth and stability.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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